

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

I. Status of the Claims

Claim 1 has been amended.

Claim 9 has been added.

No new matter has been added by way of amendment or addition.

Claims 1-8 have been examined.

Claims 1-9 are pending.

Claim 1 has been objected to and the requested amendment to claim 1 has been made.

Applicants respectfully request the objection be withdrawn.

II. Status of the Drawings

The Examiner has objected to the drawings for not illustrating every feature of the claimed invention. Applicants have amended claim 1 in order to describe the location of the supported portion in a manner consistent with the Specification (page 8, lines 12-13), and drawings as filed. Applicants respectfully request the objection be withdrawn.

III. Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-8, specifically claims 1, 3, and 5, under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite, for the use of the term “at least one of.” In response, Applicants submit that the statement “at least one of the shaft joint body and the locking body” is basic claim terminology to describe, in this instance, at least three conditions. The conditions in the

present claim are either the shaft joint body has recessed portions, the locking body has recessed portions, or both have recessed portions into which the projection is fitted. In general practice, the phrase “at least one of” when used to refer to two objects or alternatives is commonly understood to result in multiple conditions. Applicants have attached hereto as Exhibit A, an illustration of the exemplary embodiments for all three conditions.

Further, the Examiner rejects claim 5 because the metes and bounds of the claim is unclear and contradictory. Applicants respectfully traverse rejection. Claim 5 recites at least two states of hardness for the projection. In the first state the projection is “formed of a material with hardness not higher than hardness of at least one of the shaft joint body and the locking body.” In the second state, the projection has a hardness “higher than hardness of at least one of the shaft joint body and the locking body by applying surface treatment.” This is supported in the Specification on page 16, lines 11-12. The application of surface treatment, such as quenching, makes it possible to increase the hardness of the projection to have a hardness higher than that of the shaft joint body and the locking body. Thus, the claim is clear regarding at least two states of hardness of the projection, a hardness before surface treatment and a hardness after.

Applicants respectfully request that rejection to claims 1, 3 and 5 be withdrawn. Further the rejection of dependent claims 2, 4, and 6-8 under 35 U.S.C. § 112 should also be withdrawn in light of the foregoing arguments in favor of claims 1, 3, and 5.

IV. Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102

The Examiner has rejected claims 1 and 8 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,900,178 to Haldric et al. (“Haldric”). Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection.

Claim 1 of the present invention recites the element “a supported portion extending from a curved portion of a plate body and supported between the locking body and the shaft joint body.” Claim 1 further recites “a plate body having a projection projecting from the supported portion, wherein at least one of the shaft joint body and the locking body has a recessed portion into which the projection is fitted.” Thus, the projection can be fitted into the recessed portion by press-fitting the locking body into the bore of the shaft joint body. This provides the advantages of preventing trembling of the plate body and increasing the fastening strength of the plate body.

In contrast, Haldric discloses a plate body or clip 40 made from an elastic material and having oppositely bent folds 411. The oppositely bent folds 411 engage with cavities 221 of branches 22 by elastic force along an axis displaced from the axis of the locking means 30. Thus, Haldric does not disclose every element of claim 1. Further, claim 8 depends from claim 1 and is allowable based at least on its dependency to claim 1. Thus, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejections of claims 1 and 8.

V. Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

The Examiner has rejected claims 2 and 7 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Haldric, in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,474,898 to Aota et al. (“the ‘898 patent”).

Also, claims 3-6 are rejected as unpatentable over Haldric, in view of the ‘898 patent, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,155,739 to Sekine et al. (“Sekine”).

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejections. Claims 2-7 depend from claim 1 and the arguments above regarding Haldric are applicable to this rejection. Further, neither the ‘898 patent nor Sekine teach or suggest the elements missing from Haldric and present in claim 1. Thus,

Haldric, the '898 patent and Sekine do not disclose or suggest to one of ordinary skill in the art all of the elements of the claimed invention.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above amendment, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this application to issue.

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Respectfully submitted,

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Attachments



EXHIBIT A

